



**CALIFORNIA
HIGH-SPEED RAIL
AUTHORITY**

DATE: February 2, 2012
TO: Chairman Umberg and Board Members
FROM: Lance Simmens, Deputy Director for Communications
RE: Agenda item # 6 - Statewide Communications Restructuring

BACKGROUND

At the January Board meeting I delivered a statewide communications restructuring proposal identifying the roles and responsibilities of the nearly three dozen public outreach assets spread throughout the three regions. The proposal also entailed staff strengthening at the headquarters office and the designation of three regional communications directors in direct contract with the Authority overseeing these three regions.

ACTIONS

Since the January 12 meeting we have seen the departure of our press secretary but have also seen the hiring of an additional public information officer (Ms. Karen Massie) to compliment Ms. Janice Mara who joined the communications staff last month. They are also assisted by a part-time annuitant (Ms. Mary Ann Costamagna). Together they possess a treasure trove of experience in the press and public outreach field and are becoming integral components to our team. We are also just beginning the process of hiring another public information officer to replace Rachel Wall are identifying several personnel to beef up the in-house option that was agreed to by the Board unanimously on January 12.

We unfortunately lost the services of our Central Valley regional lead, Ms. Bryn Forhan and I am working to find a replacement as expeditiously as possible.

On January 24 I held an all hands meeting in Oakland to introduce the new structural alignment to the Bay Area folks. As much as imparting the new structure, we began a communications dialogue that was warmly embraced and welcomed by all. As much information and suggestion was solicited from the assembled ground troops as was dispensed by headquarters staff and we are off to a new era of two way communications flow at the Authority. On January 25 I held a similar meeting in Los Angeles with another vigorous round of information sharing and intelligence sharing that will presage an efficient and strong communications structure. I will be planning a Central Valley gathering shortly.

We have also instituted a regular message and thematic communication stream from Sacramento to the field as well as regular 9 a.m. phone calls with identified regional leads.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Building off this robust start we will continue to assemble the headquarters team and the field effort. There can be no doubt, however, that given state contracting processes it is likely that I will need to fully staff out the team for the upcoming surge that will accompany the release of the final business plan and the push to get shovels in the ground before year's end. But much like the project itself, we are moving forward.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

At this juncture I can only recommend that we push as strongly as possible in staffing up in an expeditious manner to handle the storm clouds that we know lie ahead. Your help will be greatly appreciated in facilitating such.